

# Postcards from Iraq

A lifetime of achievement  
in 12 months ...

*By Maj. Steve Martinelli*  
*Officer in Charge, Victory South Resident Office*  
*U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*

During the past 14 months the experience I have had is beyond comparison with anything I have ever done in the military. The decisive objectives truly rest upon the measure of achievement with reconstruction. The demanding hours and steep learning curve all contribute to the pride felt that we are making a difference in the lives of our fellow human beings. In a comparable spirit to the National Guard, the Corps of Engineers is an organization that prides itself in aiding the less fortunate in time of need. America shines brightest when our professionals put aside their differences and concentrate capabilities.

Throughout history, opportunities are often riddled with critics; the balance arises from frank discussions and difficult actions. Rebuilding Iraq is one such case. I have observed that most host country citizens want a safe and prosperous Iraq, the mission we were assigned provides just that. We had the unique opportunity to see a side of Iraq most will never observe. We engaged with officials and business owners, the foundation that will undoubtedly lead Iraq to a future of accomplishment. I was initially surprised by the creativity and resourcefulness Iraqis displayed. They take great pride in their work regardless of how large or small. They have very strong family values, they know their neighbors, they are devoted to their children, they are intelligent with strong resolve, and they are acceptable to diverse conditions.

Planning not bullets will eventually defeat the insurgents; this mission placed us up front working alongside dedicated and courageous Iraqis. Having traveled countless times into the heart of insurgent Shiia and Sunni areas, I am always proudest of our fellow service members as they trained the Iraqi Army and Police forces in order to provide permissive vicinities where villages and towns can prosper. Iraqi contractors risk their lives daily to assist and partner with these forces.

The incredible synchronization of effort and communication occurring with leaders on all sides gives great hope to those who have served as well as the Iraqi people. I consider the work I did as a living memorial and tribute to our fallen brothers and sisters, those who had to leave the fight and those whom America still searches for.

**Maj. Steve Martinelli**  
**Engineer Brigade 40th Infantry Division**  
**California Army National Guard**  
**Stockton**



**Maj. Steve Martinelli talks to Mahmoudiya Mayor**

